

authority ought not to reconcile us to puerile conceits. Columns were at one time used as chimney shafts, but we have outgrown such barbarous classicism: the sooner we outgrow our pedantic taste for column-monuments, too, the better. Architects cannot be troubled with such poverty of invention as not to be able to devise some more appropriate form than that of the column to meet our present requirements.

SAFETY IN SOMERSET HOUSE.

Good Mr. Editor, I am a perturbed spirit seeking to be laid,—in truth, a spirit without spirits, for I have lost them all. Ever since the 1st of this wet May I have wandered dolefully about my great work, Somerset House (and I will call it great, for there has been nothing better done since), groaning under the scandal of the University of London, who on that day set forth in print that "the surveyors of Woods and Forests had expressed some doubts as to the safety of the large room of the School of Design," my large room, and therefore that they would hold their meeting elsewhere. I have visited the bed-side of the Imaum, or In-man at the office of Woods, (they call him surveyor-general, but I don't hear many of his commands), and he said he had never expressed any doubts at all, simply because he never had any. Another of the surveyors said the room was usually full enough on Friday nights to listen to the lectures, and he did not see why the drawing students' lives should be thought less of than those of "candidates for degrees." A few nights ago, however, as I sat despondingly on one of the posts (and young Aceman nearly knocked me off by "overing" it, as he went home to his rooms above the Antiquaries'), I heard two grave little men say something to each other about the expense of fitting up the great room having been the cause of the adjournment. Now, if this be correct, it is really too bad to bring such undeserved disgrace on poor me as a constructor; and I do hope you will endeavour to get at the truth, and so render peaceful once more the now unquiet

SHADE OF CHAMBERS.

The Dark Arches.

REGENT'S-PARK AND PRIMROSE-HILL.

A RING of houses now nearly encircles this picturesque prado, which certainly is the favourite resort of the working classes. Any who would condescend to visit Primrose-hill on Sunday might see several thousand artisans and their families inhaling the breeze and enjoying the hill and woodland scenery, now looking jocund in blooming thorn. There is but one open spot as yet uncovered by brick and mortar, and that intervenes between the two parks, just at the chain bridge;—the only aperture which reveals, through a beautiful vista, on one side the green hills, waving together, on the other the sylvan Regent. The intervening field (of about two acres) is now to be let for building, and as it commands both parks, doubtless will soon be taken, and then a bastion of houses will effectually cut off this charming solace of seeming rural repose,—the only one short of Richmond-park available to the toil-worn room-keeper.

Regent's-park contains (or did so originally) 500 acres, Primrose-hill about 100, and yet these two public domains are, it seems, to be spoiled, because the Woods and Forests will not purchase the two acres. Now this small enclosure may be had for a fair valuation; and I happen to know that his grace the Duke of Portland would not object to give it in perpetuity to the Crown for the use of the public and the improvement of his estate; and yet the commissioners who have been often solicited to purchase it will not entertain the proposition. Lord Morpeth agreed in the expediency of the acquirement, but thought that "it would be inexpedient to incur the cost." The liberality of Regent in disposing of nearly 100 acres of Regent's-park (within 12 years) to increase the pleasure-grounds of the five mansions within the enclosure, and of one non-official favourite without the enclosure, who got a slice of eight acres, with the right to a bridge across the canal (and this to the exclusion of the public),

—this liberality will stand awkwardly in apposition with the sudden spirit of discreet economy, which forbids the outlay of 3,000*l.* or 4,000*l.* to save the injury of all! The application of private persons to high authority has been ineffectual on the above subject, and not even a reply has been given to a late respectful application; therefore the advocacy of THE BUILDER, of the distinguished in art who correspond with that paper, and of every friend of the working classes, is sought in this behalf by QUONDAM.

ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS.

AN ordinary meeting was held on Monday, the 22nd April, Mr. S. Smirke, V.P., in the chair, when Mr. Henry Thomas Hope, M.P., was elected Honorary Fellow; Mr. W. R. Harrison, Fellow; Mr. A. R. Dobson, Associate; and Dr. Layard; Herr Buser, Berlin; Mons. Delaunay, Liege; Mons. Prias, Strasbourg; Herr Gaj, Warsaw; Professor Geutebrück, Leipzig; Christian Hansen (Dane), of Athens; Herr Kranner, Prague; Herr Metzger, Munich; the Signor Japelli, Padua; and li Conte Selvatico, Venice, were elected Honorary Members.

A description of the damming and the construction of the piers of a bridge on the railway from Amsterdam to Rotterdam, by Mynheer Conrad, C.E., communicated by Mynheer Weenink, was read; after which Dr. Granville communicated to the meeting the particulars of the railway proposed to be constructed on Mount Cenis, and described the mode in which it is intended to excavate the tunnel, seven miles in length, from Modane to Bardonecche. We shall probably give the details.

At the annual general meeting, held May 6th, the following were elected officers for the ensuing year:—

President.—Earl de Grey.

Vice-Presidents.—Messrs. A. Salvin, C. R. Cockerell, and C. Fowler.

Honorary Secretaries.—Messrs. J. J. Scoles, and C. C. Nelson.

Ordinary Members of Council.—Messrs. C. Mayhew, D. Mocatta, O. Parker, T. H. Wyatt, G. Bailey, B. Ferrey, H. Goring, H. B. Kendall, jun., G. G. Scott, and Sanction Wood.

THE SKY LINE OF LONDON HOUSES.

ARCHITECTURE has been defined to be "the art of building something useful in a beautiful form;" and the definition, in whatever else it may be defective, has the merit of setting prominently forth the main requisite of the art—the combination, namely, of beauty with utility. Judging from our national character, we English should be strong at least upon the utilitarian side of the subject, and I am inclined to believe that the defect which makes really good architecture so rare a thing amongst us, lies altogether on the other side,—I mean, in our feeble perception of the "beautiful." It is to the respectable rather than the beautiful, that an Englishman is at all times most sensitive. It is a sense of the respectable by which he regulates house, furniture, and dress,—addens the colour of the latter down to mere blackness,—tolerates that inverted saucy of the modern hat,—and would put up, I feel satisfied, with any amount of ugliness you chose, provided always that it came sanctioned by the approval of that class of English society, from whose manners and doings he alone draws his criterion of respectability.

An instance of this conventional toleration of deformity forms the subject of my present complaint. Why, I would ask, while we are careful to give to the front and sides of our houses a line of architectural symmetry, should we so generally neglect their tops, and suffer that important line which is formed by the roof and chimneys against the sky, to be broken up and defaced by all kinds of mere rubbish and confusion? Why should huge sine pipes, sticking bolt upright in the air, or twisting into every variety of ugly contortion, be suffered to sprout out from our chimneys, and rise all over our roofs, like a crop of gigantic fungi? Can it be contended, upon any principle of taste, that the sky line is not

of just as much importance to the general effect of a building as any other? In bright weather it is at least as conspicuous as the rest, and in gloomy days (of which we have somewhere like twenty to one of sunshine in this climate), when the rest of the architecture has little relief, this line, telling dark and cutting against the sky, becomes the most prominent of all, and by its good or bad effect decides the general aspect of the edifice.

I am aware that many examples exist in and about the metropolis in which this line appears to have been duly considered, and the chimneys, instead of looking like mere afterthoughts, have been brought into some agreement with the general design. But what avails it? No sooner has the architect completed his work, and the house become inhabited, than the bricklayer and chimney-pot-man are sure to be sent for to give a few crowning touches to the work, and render it as pitiable and ridiculous in effect as any caricaturist of modern architecture could desire, and give us another specimen of the case of poor Mr. Briggs, whose house, as portrayed in a former number of *Peach*, with its roof very profusely decorated with these delectable contrivances, may serve as an excellent example of their general effect.

But perhaps it will be said, who can help it? If architects, with all the scientific resources of the present age, cannot build a chimney that will carry smoke, houses must be rendered habitable, at whatever expense to their outward appearance, by these or any other means that can be devised. An objection which just brings us to the question I wish to state, namely, are there no other means of effecting the same object? These contrivances either clog the chimneys, or they do not: if not, then there is the less reason to tolerate them, and if they do, surely our architects are competent to understand the principles upon which they act, and apply the same under forms a little less revolting to all good taste.

AN ARTIST.

WATER PRESSURE AS MOTIVE POWER. INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS.

ON the 7th, Mr. William Cubitt, President, in the chair, the paper read was "On the application of water pressure, as a motive power, for working cranes and other kinds of machinery," by Mr. W. G. Armstrong. The object of the paper was to direct attention to the advantages of a more extended application of hydraulic pressure as a motive power, and to point out the means of attaining this desirable end, illustrating the arguments by descriptions and drawings of the engines on this principle already erected, since the year 1845, when the author first designed a crane, to be worked by the pressure of water from the street water pipes, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The principle of these engines, as applied to cranes, was described to be very simple. In order to lift a weight, the water, under a pressure of about 100 feet head, or more, being admitted through a slide valve into a cylinder, exerted a force on a piston, whose rod was connected with the hoisting chain, so arranged by passing over several pulleys, as to increase its length of travel to the requisite duty to be performed; the piston receding from the pressure therefore raised the weight to the height required. The lowering of the weight was accomplished by a reverse action, and the crane was turned in either direction by a similar action of a smaller cylinder, whose piston rod was connected with a rack, working into a circle of teeth, fixed to the base of the moveable frame of the crane.

A water-pressure engine, it was said, had been lately very successfully applied by the author, in South Hetton Colliery, for the traction of waggons upon an underground railway. Similar engines had also been erected in the lead mines, at Allenbends, for lifting ore, and other purposes. Reservoirs were there formed upon the neighbouring hills, and pipes were carried into the mines to supply the engines, the expended water flowing out by a level.

THE MEMBERS OF THE ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION dined together on the 7th.